

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for notifying a computer user of a computer information
2 message, comprising the steps of:
3 receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;
4 determining if a condition associated with the received action requires
5 generation of an information message;
6 selecting an information message to be generated corresponding to said
7 condition;
8 locating a target object associated with the action performed by the user, to
9 which the information contained within the notification message relates; and
10 displaying a notification object which indicates the target object and
11 contains said information message corresponding to said condition.
12
1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises a
2 warning.
3
4 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises
5 an error message.
6
7 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object comprises a
8 notification.
9
10 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object includes a
11 cartouche which points to the target.
12
1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of displaying includes
2 providing a video animation sequence.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of displaying includes
2 generating an audio indicator.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is
2 collapsible.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said notification object collapses in
2 response to a user action.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein said notification object collapses in
2 response to a mouse event.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said notification object contains
2 an icon, and collapses in response to a mouse click on the icon.

1 12. The method of claim 9, wherein said notification object collapses in
2 response to a keyboard command.

1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is persistent
2 and remains displayed until said condition is removed.

1 14. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is displaced
2 from said target object so that it does not obscure said target object.

1 15. The method of claim 1, wherein said notification object is non-
2 modal and enables the user to continue interaction with an application program
3 corresponding to said target while said object is being displayed.

1 16. The method of claim 15, wherein said notification object enables a
2 user to interact with application programs other than the application program
3 corresponding to said target, while said object is being displayed.

1 17. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 hiding the notification object when an application associated with said
3 target is inactive; and
4 displaying the notification object when an application associated with said
5 target is active.

1 18. A system for notifying a computer user of a computer information
2 message, comprising:
3 means for receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;
4 means for determining if the received action requires generation of a
5 computer information message;
6 means for selecting a computer information message to be generated
7 corresponding to said action performed by the user;
8 means for locating a target object corresponding to the action performed
9 by the user, to which the information contained within the notification message
10 relates; and
11 means for displaying a notification object which indicates the target object
12 and contains said information message corresponding to said target object.

1 19. A graphical user interface element for providing a user with
2 information regarding a computer application being executed, comprising a
3 notification object containing information relating to a target within said computer
4 application and an indication mechanism which forms part of said object and
5 points to the target with which the computer notification object is associated.

1 20. The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said information
2 comprises text information.

1 21. The user interface element of claim 19, further comprising:
2 an icon disposed within said object relating to said information.

1 22. The user interface element of claim 21, wherein said icon comprises
2 an on-screen button for receiving user interaction.

1 23. The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said indication
2 mechanism comprises a cartouche.

1 24. The user interface element of claim 19, further comprising:
2 an audio indicator for indicating the display of the notification object on a
3 computer screen to a user.

1 25. The user interface element of claim 19, wherein said notification
2 object is displayed with animation.

1 26. A computer program stored in a computer-readable medium which
2 executes the following steps:

3 receiving an action performed on a computer by a user;
4 determining if the received action requires generation of an information
5 message;
6 selecting an information message to be generated corresponding to said
7 action performed by the user;
8 locating a target object corresponding to the action performed by the user,
9 to which the information contained within the notification message relates; and

10 displaying a notification object which indicates the target and contains said
11 information message corresponding to said target object.